

PASSING The BUCKS

By Anonymous

I have spent a lot of time riding my motorcycle with a group and have learned that riders tend to let their guard down in a group setting. It is critical that those of us who ride in groups maintain our situational awareness at all times. This principle was recently reinforced a few times during a 400-mile trip I took from Abilene, Texas, to Ruidoso, N.M., to attend a week-long motorcycle rally.

Besides my friend running out of gas (which is a whole different story), the trip to Ruidoso was, for the most part, uneventful. If you've ever had the pleasure of making this particular ride, you'll know that it's a straight at shot all the way until you get into Lincoln County, N.M. Because of the construction in this area, the ride can become more challenging.

What was once mostly a two-lane road with more than its fair share of twists and bends will eventually be a four-lane highway with slow bending curves. Because of all the changes and detours that come with any construction project, the white and yellow stripes that illuminate the center and shoulders of the road have been removed and laid down several times. Because the removal process involves grinding off the lines, there were grooves in the road where the lines used to be.

My riding group happened to reach this area after dark which made it difficult to see where the grooves were. Whenever I came across those grooves, the bike took on a mind of its own and tried to follow along the grooves like a toy car on a slot car racing track. It was pretty unnerving when my bike would try to go off by itself down one of these grooves, especially when the direction was into oncoming traffic! I was forced to slow down to a crawl and pay special attention to everything going on around me.


When traveling in a group, it is also important to maintain the proper following distance from the rider in front of you. While the group I ride with is very good about pointing out potentially hazardous debris on the road, it is still up to the individual riders to maintain situational awareness. If you follow too closely, you won't allow yourself enough time to maneuver around debris. My friend did exactly that and struck a 2 x 4 board lying in the road with a nail sticking straight up out of it. Yup, you guessed it; the nail went straight into his tire.

He was very lucky that the tire just went at and didn't blow. He could have lost control of his bike, wrecking it and causing injury or even death. For-

tunately, his lack of attentiveness only cost him the price of a new tire.

Another incident that illustrates my point about situational awareness happened one night when we were riding through the mountains. The cold mountain air was exhilarating. When we reached a particularly dark area of the road, the group leader came across a beautiful six-point buck. He immediately pointed him out to the rest of us so we could avoid him.

We all were so taken by the sight of him that we ignored the opposite side of the road where another two bucks and a doe were just about to cross. Needless to say, we were very grateful that the rumble of our bikes scared them back in the direction they came from. Had they continued across the road, there's no telling how much damage or injury those animals could have done.

Riding motorcycles takes skill and attentiveness. Riding motorcycles in a group might cause some riders to pay less attention to what they are doing. It is paramount to maintain situational awareness at all times, during all circumstances when riding. It just may save your life. 

**"the bike
Took on
a mind
of its own"**

